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RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ASHGABAT 000907

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STATE FOR SCA/CEN AND DRL

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: NEW PRESIDENT'S RECORD ON FIRINGS AND ARRESTS MAY

REFLECT SOME LOGIC, WITH CAVEATS

REF: A. ASHGABAT 504

[1](#)B. IIR 6940 0045 07

[1](#)C. ASHGABAT 841

[1](#)D. ASHGABAT 827

[1](#)E. ASHGABAT 831

Classified By: Charge Richard E. Hoagland for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. SUMMARY: Analytic commentary on Eurasian news and Turkmen opposition websites recently declared President Berdimuhamedov's leadership to be largely a mirror image of Niyazov's, and characterized the record of government dismissals and arrests since February as a "purge" of potential threats. Closer scrutiny of the record suggests that the new president may be making logical decisions to dismiss or arrest these officials either because of their involvement with Niyazov's personal fund or because they simply have been corrupt or incompetent. The new leadership appears invested in the reputation of the new government and in making improvements to the system, albeit on a gradual timeline. Importantly, the new president's record does not support the notion of a paranoid leadership regularly purging its bureaucracy in order to better consolidate its power. Whether these individuals were arrested and convicted for just cause or not, we will continue to press the rule-of-law issues of fair and transparent trials by an independent judiciary. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. Post is aware of fourteen high-level advisors or senior government officials from the Niyazov era whom Berdimuhamedov has dismissed since he took office in February. All of these dismissals were well publicized in the local media and on internet websites. Seven of the fourteen were publicly dismissed from their posts, but media and government reports made no further reference to them, so we cannot comment on their whereabouts. Media reports indicated that the administration publicly dismissed and arrested seven other individuals. However, the president's decision to order these people arrested may follow a certain logic, given that all seven may actually be guilty of various crimes, including

theft of government assets, influence-pandering, abuse of office, and inciting ethnic discord. Several also may have been substantive threats to the new president, based on their former position of power and influence in Niyazov's administration.

13. The following are senior officials whom Berdimuhamedov fired and later ordered arrested:

-- Ovezgeldy Atayev, Chairman of the Mejlis, was fired and arrested the day after Niyazov's demise. He was charged with abuse of office, violating the constitutional rights of citizens and "inciting discord between clans." Notably, he was to have been Niyazov's constitutionally-determined successor.

-- Akmyrat Rejepov, Chief of the Presidential Security Service, was arrested in mid-May (ref a). As a member of Niyazov's inner circle and his constant companion, he had intimate knowledge of the former regime's inner political and business decisionmaking. More importantly, he is also widely believed to have had access to Niyazov's personal fund. Berdimuhamedov may have viewed his power and influence as a potential threat to his own. That said, the generally accepted "real" story of why he was arrested and subsequently convicted states that he was arrested after he sought to assist former President Niyazov's son, Myrat, to smuggle the deceased president's wealth out of Turkmenistan (ref b).

-- Enebay Atayeva, Minister of Culture, Television and Radio, was arrested in June. Government press sources stated that she failed to carry out her official duties and was responsible for the abysmal quality of Turkmen state

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television programming. There may be more to her arrest than is known, however, given her subordination to Berdimuhamedov when he was Niyazov's Deputy Chairman for Culture, Television and Radio, and he would have intimate knowledge of her performance and activities while minister. Likewise, she may have possessed negative information about the current president.

-- Payzegeldy Meredov, a former Minister of Agriculture and Niyazov favorite, was arrested in August and charged with numerous financial crimes related to cotton exports (ref c). Local press did not announce his arrest, but mentioned a possible court trial as well as the arrest of his son. Meredov, who also had access to the former president's personal fund, is widely regarded to have been extremely corrupt.

-- Alexander Zhadan, long-serving deputy director for Niyazov's business affairs and the putative controller of Niyazov's personal fund, was put under house arrest, according to an unconfirmed August 28 opposition website report, along with two other former regime insiders. As a member of Niyazov's inner circle, he would also have had intimate knowledge of the regime's activities and possible crimes.

-- Victor Khramov, another trusted advisor and insider. He, too, would likely have had access to Niyazov's personal fund.

-- Vladimir Umnov, another trusted advisor.

14. Berdimuhamedov fired the following individuals from their posts between April and mid-August, but we have no information that suggests they were arrested or otherwise charged. The new administration may have chosen to fire these officials for failing to follow the president's orders -- or for sheer incompetence:

-- Akmammed Rakhmanov, former Minister of Internal Affairs, was reportedly fired for incompetence and his inability to lead. Although press sources indicate that Berdimuhamedov

complained of corruption and mismanagement in the ministry, we have seen no reports that anyone filed criminal charges against him. The decision to fire him may also have been directed against his failure to prevent the smuggling of the former President's treasures.

-- Orazberdy Hudayberdyev, Minister of Railway Transport, was reportedly fired for professional incompetence and "failure to perform his duties as assigned." As reported ref b, the former president's treasures are rumored to have been smuggled out by train.

--Yagshygeldy Esenov, Chairman of the Supreme Court, was dismissed specifically for failing to perform his duties as deputy chairman of a presidential commission that Berdimuhamedov established in February tasked with investigating civil complaints against law enforcement agency activities (ref d). (NOTE: The commission's primary mission may be to reverse the effects of Niyazov's repressions, and to repair the state's international image. END NOTE.) The president was reportedly very displeased with Esenov's performance last summer when he discovered Esenov was hindering the review of cases put before the commission. In particular, Esenov, as Chairman of the Supreme Court, had approved the 2002 prosecution of eleven coup-related cases. In an effort to avoid acknowledgement that he had approved the 2002 prosecution of these cases, he rejected all of their 207 commission appeals. Soon after, six of the eleven also lost their final Supreme Court appeals. Berdimuhamedov fired Esenov in July and pardoned the eleven individuals in August.

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-- Gurbanguly Aytgulyev, Chairman of the Turkmenokun Joint Stock Company, was fired for failing to perform his duties. Local press provided little insight on his firing, but the fertilizer sector has long been troubled by abuse and mismanagement, and President Berdimuhamedov promised farmers that they would be provided ample fertilizer for this year's crops.

-- Yusup Davudov, Minister of Power Engineering and Industry, was fired incompetence, but specifically blamed for failing to ensure an uninterrupted supply of electricity to the country and for failing to use existing electricity infrastructure and facilities efficiently. The president asked the security service to investigate him, but no charges have yet surfaced (ref e).

-- Jumadurdy Kakaliev, Minister of Construction and Construction Materials Industry, was reportedly fired for incompetence, and Berdimuhamedov suggested that he might be criminally charged for making unspecified "mistakes" (ref e).

-- Ashirgeldi Zamanov, Minister of Automobile Transportation and Highways, was fired for incompetence and for the ministry's failure to pay salaries to personnel. The president told Zamanov that he too, would be prosecuted if further investigation revealed any criminal activity (ref e).

15. COMMENT: Post acknowledges that a culture of full public disclosure of criminal charges, arrests and investigations does not exist here, preventing a robust assessment of the degree to which the new president is removing real or perceived threats to his power. That said, we believe that the arrests of the vast majority of individuals in the first category may be directly or indirectly associated with an ongoing investigation of Niyazov's personal fund that has probably been going on for some time, but which Berdimuhamedov announced publicly when he established the Supreme Auditing Commission July 13. In the case of most of the second category of individuals, he is probably removing bureaucrats who are accused of standard criminal behavior or who are completely incompetent. It does appear to observers here, however, that the new leadership is invested in the

reputation of the new government and in making improvements to the system, albeit on a gradual timeline. But the new president's record does not support the notion of a paranoid leadership regularly purging its bureaucracy in order to better consolidate its power. Whether these individuals were arrested and convicted for just cause or not, we will continue to press the rule-of-law issues of fair and transparent trials by an independent judiciary. END COMMENT.
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